

**SELECT BOARD WORKSHOP MINUTES
MONDAY, JULY 19, 2021
APPROVED**

SB Members Present: Rebecca H. Pine, Chair; Alison S. Manugian, Vice Chair; Peter S Cunningham, Clerk (via remote participation); Joshua A. Degen, Member (via remote participation); John F. Reilly, Member
Also Present: Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant;

Ms. Pine called the workshop to order at 4:01pm.

Mr. Haddad said that the AHT was requesting access to several town owned parcels to conduct site walks. Mr. Haddad said that the parcels were:

- 145 Main Street (a/k/a Prescott School): 113-43
- Bridge Street: 248-9
- Hoyt's Wharf Road 249-51
- Nashua Road 227-135-0
- Townsend Road parcels (on opposite sides of Fieldstone Drive) 205-9.01 and 204-13.1

Ms. Manugian moved to approve access to the requested sites. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Manugian-aye; Reilly-aye; Pine-aye; Cunningham-aye; Josh-abstain.

GOALS

Ms. Pine said that the first proposed goal was **Environmental (Contamination) Issues (PFAS, GEMS Site, Conductorlab, etc.)**. The objective of the proposed goal was to Monitor/Manage efforts to mitigate contamination and protect public health. Become better informed as a Board to the emerging environmental issues that are/will confront Groton.

Mr. Cunningham said that this was his suggested goal adding they had environmental concerns they were dealing with in their water and also cited COVID as an environmental concern they would possibly need to look at moving forward. Ms. Pine said that the Water Commission was keeping an eye on the PFAS issues. Mr. Cunningham said it may be helpful to have a working group. Ms. Manugian said that she didn't think they needed another standing committee to look at COVID but thought they could be looking at climate change at a policy level. Mr. Haddad said that the Planning Board received a grant, the MVP grant, to look at climate issues. He said that the Board doing anything would be repetitive. Ms. Pine said that the GEMS site was a potentially big thing they needed to keep an eye on. Mr. Haddad said that on that issue they received a grant from the MRPC. He said that they did what they needed to do to report this but that the property was not owned by the Town. Mr. Degen said that the PFAS issue was way beyond the Water Department. He said that PFAS was found in a lot of products and thought they needed to make this a goal and a standing committee to assess all threats that exist and educate the public. Mr. Degen agreed with pulling COVID out of this adding it could be a different goal. There was a discussion to hold a workshop as the goal and see what action items emerge from the workshop.

Ms. Pine said that the second proposed goal was **Taxpayer Burden /Costs of Government**. The objective of the proposed goal was to Develop Programs to Alleviate Taxpayer Burden, including:

1. Work on developing other non-property taxed based sources of revenue to offset burden on taxpayers.
2. Determine best use of the Federal Coronavirus Relief Funds for taxpayer and town financial stability.
3. Review existing PILOT agreements and consider further action.
4. Staff new TREAD committee to provide taxpayer relief.
5. Explore regionalization for bulk purchasing and opportunities for shared town services as appropriate.

Mr. Haddad said that he didn't think this needed to be a goal adding there were programs in place that looked at ways to help taxpayers. Ms. Pine said that she thought they needed to look at their PILOT's, that they should consider looking at Air BnB's and ways to capture that potential revenue, as a few examples. Ms. Manugian said that cannabis was a possibility to look into as well as ways to file home rule petitions to possibly increase tax deductions. She suggested keeping numbers 1, 3 and 4. There was a discussion about adding possibility of taxing Air BnB's (short term rental properties) as a goal within this also. Mr. Reilly said it would be nice to have a comparison of non-profit properties and what they would be paying for taxes should they not be exempt.

Ms. Pine said that the third proposed goal was **Affordable Housing and Housing Diversity**. The objective of the proposed goal was to Support the work of the Affordable Housing Trust, the Groton Housing Authority, and the Housing Partnership to make tangible progress on increasing the number of Affordable Housing Units on the MA Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). Work with the Planning Board to address MBTA Housing Choice Community requirements for increased housing density and housing diversity, and to pass new Zoning which maximizes the number of affordable units required.

Ms. Manugian said this was conceptually important but thought the goals should be something they needed to add to work they were already doing. Ms. Pine said that they needed to keep this front and center. There was a discussion about possible benchmarks for this goal as would likely be developed as the goal progressed over a two-year time period.

Ms. Pine said that the fourth proposed goal was **Pro-active Planning for the opening of Indian Hill Music Center**. The objective of the proposed goal was to Complete Old Ayer Rd/Boston Road realignment project and related IHMC traffic mitigation. Support Economic and Commercial activity related to increased visitor traffic in Groton.

Ms. Pine said that this was going to happen and thought that they should just keep planning on ways in which to get the word out. Ms. Manugian said that this was all part of economic development and should be combined with proposed goal #7. Mr. Haddad said he didn't like this goal adding this was part of internal workings that were being done already. He said that they should look at supporting economic and commercial activity related to increased traffic in Groton and possibly add it to goal #7. Mr. Cunningham said that they should be communicating with people about what had been going on internally with traffic and intersections.

Mr. Haddad said that the fifth proposed goal, **Collective Bargaining**, should be his but could be kept with the Board's goals. This goal was combined with goal #2.

Ms. Pine said that the sixth proposed goal was **Support Diversity Task Force, and Ongoing Equity and Inclusion Efforts**. The proposed goal was to Implement the recommendations of the Diversity Task Force, including asking the Task Force to provide a list of suggested names for currently un-named roads. Support ongoing education and awareness efforts to promote diversity.

Ms. Manugian said that the Diversity Task Force had brought forward two big goals and wasn't sure that this needed to be a goal. Ms. Pine said that they as a Board needed to continue to promote adding this wasn't going away. She said that they needed to keep it on the forefront and in the public eye. Mr. Reilly said that they were doing this and would continue to be doing something. Mr. Degen said that as long as they had a Diversity Task Force they would continue to receive reports and hear from them as things come up. There was consensus that this was redundant.

Ms. Pine said that the seventh proposed goal was **Public Transportation, Parking, Walkability**. The proposed goal was to Develop Overall Transportation Improvements, including:

1. Significantly Increase Public Transportation Available in Groton (bus, ride-share, etc.).
2. Update Parking Study and consider ways to add Parking in Town Center.
3. Create a sidewalk extension to both Gibbet Hill Trailhead and Indian Hill Music Center.

Ms. Pine said that she thought this would fall under the Planning Board adding that it was time for Groton to look at the Master Plan. Mr. Haddad said that it was part of an upcoming capital plan. Ms. Manugian said that this could be boiled down a bit and included in the economic development goal. There was a discussion about possible ride share options, etc. Ms. Manugian suggested adding this to goal #4 and make it an overall economic development goal. There was a discussion about updating the parking study and reviewing whether additional parking was needed in the center of town.

Ms. Pine said that the eighth proposed goal was **Select Board Operations**. The proposed goal was to Continue to Improve Select Board Operations.

Ms. Pine said she wasn't sure it needed to be a goal but wanted to make sure someone was reading the warrants carefully. Mr. Degen said he reviewed the expense warrant each time they received one. Ms. Pine said that she would like to see them formalize committee reports more often. She said that they needed to work to keep recruiting volunteers. Ms. Manugian said that she didn't think these needed to be goals adding they should look at their committees and either reduce the size of them, or eliminate some of them also. The Board decided to remove this as a potential goal.

Mr. Degen and Mr. Cunningham were assigned to goal #1. Ms. Manugian was assigned to goal #2. Ms. Pine was assigned to goal #3. Mr. Reilly and Mr. Cunningham was assigned to goal #4.

Mr. Haddad said that he would put this on the agenda for Monday, July 26th for formalization. There was a brief discussion about potential Town Manager goals and whether there should be separate goals. It was suggested that the Town Manager look at potential COVID costs (both revenue shortfalls and potential increases) moving forward in future budget cycles. Bringing the capital plan to the forefront ahead of the operating budget was a topic for consideration.

LIAISON ASSIGNMENTS

Mr. Degen volunteered to be the alternate to the Board of Health. Mr. Degen volunteered to be the liaison to the Planning Board with Mr. Reilly as alternate. Mr. Reilly and Ms. Manugian would remain liaisons to schools. Mr. Cunningham was volunteered to be liaison to Water and Sewer. Ms. Manugian would be liaison to Housing Authority.

Ms. Manugian asked if there should be a liaison to the Diversity Task Force and not an appointed member. Mr. Degen said that he voted on matters that didn't come before their Board but was amenable to being just an ex-officio non-voting member. Mr. Degen said that the Charge would need to be modified to change that. Mr. Degen said that by abstaining on certain votes being advanced to the Select Board there was no preconceived bias. Ms. Manugian said she didn't agree with that. Ms. Manugian suggested they leave it alone for now and suggested that Mr. Degen vote more freely as the Board's representative. Mr. Degen said he would attempt to vote on things.

Ms. Pine adjourned the meeting at 6:15pm.

Approved: _____
Peter S. Cunningham, Clerk

_____ *respectfully submitted:*
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 7/26/2021